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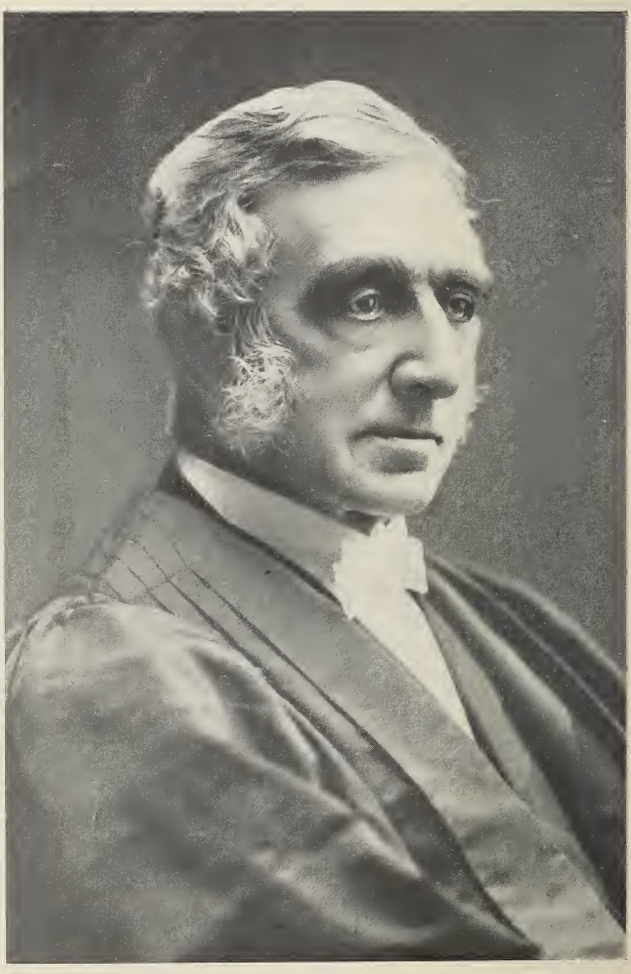

REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

Well-Built

Plain Talks . . .
To Young People

By
Theodore L. Cuyler

United Society of Christian Endeavor
Boston and Chicago

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I.

WELL-BUILT.

THE most wonderful of all preachers closed the most wonderful of all sermons by drawing a parallel between two classes of character-builders. The foolish class built on the shifting sand; and, when the flood of trials came, their flimsy structures "fell in." Of how a wiser class base and build their characters for all eternity, I propose to say a few things to the thousands of my young readers.

The first thing is to secure a solid foundation. That foundation is not to be created; it is already provided, — Christ Jesus. On this everlasting Rock of Ages, a divine Redeemer atoning for your sins, a divine Teacher instructing you by his perfect commandments, a divine Regenerator changing your inmost heart, a divine Supporter strengthening your will, a divine Mediator with God watching over you, and putting his everlasting arm of love underneath your weakness, — this is the foundation that no floods of tempta-

tion can wash out or undermine. All else than this is crumbling dirt or shifting sand. Shallow conversions make shallow Christians. I trust that you have dug deep, and laid your foundations well. The Minot's Ledge lighthouse is not only built on a rock; it is built with iron bolts and clamps into the rock. So you must be built into Christ by a living union of your weakness to his strength, your ignorance to his omniscience, your poverty to his wealth of grace, your sinfulness to his perfect righteousness. This is faith's grip that holds; this is the thorough work that goes down deeper than mere excitement or emotion or formal professions, and it binds your soul fast to the omnipotent Son of God. The best part of a true Christian is the unseen part, as the vital part of a tree is its root. So the innermost graces that lie, as it were, in the very depths of a Christian soul next to Christ are the most precious and powerful and enduring portion of the man.

But a building is not done when the foundation is laid. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is only the initial process, and then comes the command to build up yourselves on our most holy faith. God's quarry is rich in materials. It would be a good thing for our churches if solid granite were in greater demand. Flashing marble is very ornamental for lintels and architrave and capitals. But

in these times we need more firm granite of honesty, courage, truthfulness, and self-denial. Every now and then a church is disfigured by an ugly crack or rent in its walls, from the fact that a bit of friable pumice-stone was put in there in the shape of a swindling or frivolous professor. Wholesome discipline is often a duty; and the sooner that pumice-stone comes out, the more creditable is it for the honor and strength of a Christian church. What is true of a church as God's building is equally true of individual character; nothing should go into a Christian's character except what is taken from God's quarry.

Some Christians are not built up symmetrically. They are lopsided, and their painful deficiency is on the ethical side of their religion. They can sing in a prayer-meeting, and pray devoutly, and exhort fluently; but outside of the meeting they cannot always be trusted. What they lack is a rigid sense of right and a constant adherence to it. They need more conscience, a conscience to detect sin, and a granite-like principle to resist its seductions. The word of these Christians is not always to be relied on; in matters of business they do not always go by the air-line. I once dealt with a man who was quite an exhorter in his church, and liked to talk to me in his market-stall about the "good times" they were enjoying in their revival meetings. Yet when

this devout dealer's meat was "weighed in the balance," it was too often found "wanting." He had more emotion than conscience in his religion. That eminent theologian, Dr. Charles Hodge, of Princeton, at the funeral of a certain excellent man, said of him, "He was not only pious, he was good." He went on to explain that there is sometimes a piety that expends much fervor in devotions, yet is wanting in that conscientious goodness that abhors everything wrong, and is scrupulous in keeping Christ's commandments. Such people are not well-built Christians.

Every wise builder makes constant use of his plumb-line. All the showy ornamentation that he can put on his edifice amounts to nothing if the walls are not perpendicular. Sometimes we see a flimsy structure whose bulging walls are shored up by props and skids to keep them from tumbling into the street. I am afraid that there are thousands of reputations in commerce, in politics, and even in the church, that are shored up by various devices. "Take heed how ye build." The man in Christ's parable, who founded his home on loose sand or gravel, might boast that his building looked just as fine as that of his neighbor, who built on the rock. He cared only for appearances, and made no allowance for storms or floods or God's law of gravitation. So the Master tells us that the ill-based and ill-built

house "fell in." It is a mere question of time how soon every character will fall in if it is not based on the rock and built according to Jesus Christ's plumb-line. It may go down in this world; it is sure to go down in the next. We ought to lay the plumb-line up against all our religious acts and services, even against our prayers. Do we pray only to save appearances, and because we are "called on" to do it? Or do we pray from sincere hungerings for spiritual blessings? Pledges to take part in meetings are good things; but be sure to keep Jesus Christ behind the pledge. Some contributions of money may in man's sight loom very large, yet in God's sight may be very moderate, because they cost the giver no sacrifice or self-denial. The poor widow's two mites stood the Master's measurement admirably.

If failing to use the divine plumb-line in character-building is a great mistake, it is another mistake that the little every-day actions are made of small account. You could hardly make a worse blunder. Christian influence mainly depends on what you may regard as little things. It is the aggregate of a good man's or good woman's life that tells for the honor of our Lord and Saviour. A little boy watched the process of building a house across the street until his father asked him whether he meant to be a bricklayer. "No, papa; but I am thinking

what a small thing a brick is, and yet what a big house they build out of them." The child had got hold of the true secret of constructing a beautiful or a powerful character. It is by conscientious attention to the minute thoughts, words, and deeds of every-day life. It is by adding the brick of courage to the brick of faith, and to this the brick of temperance and the brick of patience and the brick of brotherly love and the brick of honesty and of benevolence, that a noble Christian character is reared. Nothing is of small account that involves your influence in a sharp-eyed world. Other people's eyes are upon you as well as your Master's eyes. He made you a Christian to be looked at. It was by the daily addition of one good deed to another that such Christians as William E. Dodge and Samuel F. Smith and Mary Lyon and Clara Barton and George H. Stuart and Harlan Page reared their solid structures of character.

The Athenian architects of the Parthenon finished the upper side of the matchless frieze as perfectly as the lower side, because the goddess Minerva saw that side. Every one of the five thousand statues in the cathedral of Milan is wrought as if God's eye were on the sculptor. Michael Angelo said that he "carved for eternity." Every true, blood-bought Christian is a habitation of God through his Spirit. Young friends, build for eternity. And let every

one take heed how he buildeth; for the Architect-in-chief will inspect each one's work on the great day of judgment.

"I count this thing to be grandly true:
That a righteous deed is a step towards God,
Lifting the soul from its common clod
To a purer air, and a clearer view.

"Heaven is not reached by a single bound,
But we build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to its summit round by round."

II.

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR CALLING.

"HAPPY is the man who finds what his work is, and does it! To find it is to find our calling, and to do it is to find our highest joy and peace." So wrote the large-hearted and eloquent Dr. Norman Macleod of Scotland, and to those true words I can echo a hearty Amen!

On the other hand, hardly any more lamentable lot can befall any man than to mistake his work, and engage in any occupation for which he is not fitted. This is especially true in regard to the gospel ministry. The peculiar training for the pulpit is not of such a character as to fit a man for any other profession, and when once ordained to the ministry, it is not easy to demit the sacred office. Some who have not been successful in the pulpit have found a congenial harbor in a college "chair" or the secretaryship of a religious society or in editorial pursuits; but many more are drifting from place to place in search after pulpits that do not

seem to be searching after them. This pitiable waste of a man's only life in this world is hardly less than a living tragedy.

The three most vitally important choices for any young man to make are: a Saviour for his soul, a good wife for his home, and the right occupation for his life. On this last point let me offer a few fatherly suggestions.

My own childhood and early youth were spent in a thrifty rural region in western New York, and at that time it was the general custom of the country boys either to learn a mechanical trade or to follow their fathers' pursuit as farmers. Occasionally some bright lad prepared for college, or some ambitious one headed for New York to seek a "situation."

A mighty change has come over young America in these latter days. Among the ancient Jews there was a proverb, "He who does not bring up his son for a trade brings up a boy for the devil." But our native American boys quite scorn the idea of mechanical pursuits, and leave such manual labors to the hands of foreigners. It is quite a waste of breath to remind them that Benjamin Franklin was a printer, that Roger Sherman and Vice-president Henry Wilson were shoemakers, that Elihu Burritt was a blacksmith, and that Governor Banks of Massachusetts "graduated from an institution which had a factory-bell on the roof and a water-wheel at

the bottom." I cannot put my eye on a single American boy who is learning a mechanical trade (unless it be telegraphy), and about all the practical mechanics hereabouts are of foreign extraction.

This fact does not give me any peculiar satisfaction; and it affords still less satisfaction to see the swarm of young men who pour into our great city begging for a situation in a store or in a warehouse, or in a counting-room or a bank, or some place in which they can find employment without soiling their hands. An easy place and good pay is about their highest ambition. And the melancholy array of poor fellows who wear out their shoes and their patience in a vain pursuit for a "situation" makes another chapter of living tragedies. City life is full of perilous attractions; and alas, how many young moths fly into the candle, only to be scorched to death!

In selecting your occupation, endeavor first to find out what the Creator made you for. Consult your natural bent and talent. If you have a talent for trade, you may seek an opening for your energies in a counting-room or a store. If you have a natural aptitude for the branches connected with medical science, and what may be called a medical enthusiasm, you may strive to become a physician. If your mathematical capacity fit you for it, you may prepare to be an engineer.

Study yourself; study the leadings of Providence, and pray earnestly for divine direction. A man seldom fails in life who understands his *forte*, and few ever succeed who do not understand it.

Seek for a useful and productive calling, and steer clear of any business that savors of "speculation" as you would of a gambling-den or a bottle of brandy. There is too much of what may be called the "gambling element" in several lines of business; it works like a fever on the brain, and is not wholesome to strong religious health and character. Haste to be rich — and rich at all hazards — has sent thousands to perdition. That poisonous malaria is in the air; look out for it!

Having decided on the calling best adapted to your talents, don't be ashamed to begin at the bottom and work like a beaver.

Isaac Rich, of Boston, began by selling oysters at a stand in the market, and he brought them there in a wheelbarrow from the sloops. He became a millionaire, and bequeathed $1,700,000 to establish the Boston University. Many a Methodist student has reached the ministry in Isaac Rich's wheelbarrow. A city judge in New York told me that he hammered down paving-stones in the street to earn enough to pay the captain of the sloop who brought him to New York from Rhode Island. That is the sort of fibre to make a good Christian Endeavorer.

That noble Christian philanthropist, the late William E. Dodge, started as an errand boy in a store, swept the floor, and took down the shutters in the morning. For this he received his board and fifty dollars a year. Out of that salary, he told me, he laid by some money. Before he died he knew what it was to give at the rate of a thousand dollars a day to great religious and benevolent movements. I once had the privilege to introduce him to that prince of English philanthropists, Lord Shaftesbury, and I said, "My lord, here is our American Shaftesbury."

The multiplication of colleges in our country has multiplied largely the candidates for what are called the "learned professions." Some enter them who are better fitted for a farm or a shop. Of whatever other occupations there be a scarcity, there is no lack of lawyers in almost every town. A prominent lawyer in New York remarked that "unless a young man had remarkable abilities for the bar, or inherited wealth, or influential family connections, the profession of the law is the most genteel method of starving that is practised." That there is always room enough up at the top is poor consolation to the young lawyers or doctors who are struggling for a living down at the bottom.

However crowded may be the legal or medical or mercantile or engineering profession, I am confi-

dent that the one line of business that is not overdone is *good preaching*. No man is so absolutely certain to find immediate and constant employment as a capable, earnest, soul-loving, and truly consecrated minister of Jesus Christ. Vacant pulpits are constantly on the lookout for them. Any healthy, vigorous young minister, who has had a divine call to his holy work, is not likely to wait long for a call to a pulpit.

What is a call to the ministry? Reduced to the shortest and simplest English, it is the ability to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that people will come to hear it. This last clause is very important. More than one young man of fervent piety and scholarly culture has failed sadly in the ministry because he had not the gift of preaching. People would not come to listen to him; and it is very certain that we can do but little good to those who do not like us, and none at all to those who will not come to hear our message.

Good health, the gift of speech, a Christ-loving heart, industry, and a holy zeal to win souls, — if you have these, you may prepare for the ministry at whatever cost of toil or self-denial. A faithful, soul-winning minister need not wish to change thrones with an archangel.

Of the host of young Christians who may read this article, only a small proportion may enter a

pulpit; but all of them may serve Jesus Christ in their calling, however humble it be. In choosing your business, aim higher than to make a living; aim to make a life worth carrying up to the judgment-seat of Christ.

III.

THE SIN OF TRIFLING WITH AFFECTIONS.

TWO blessings survived the wreck in the Garden of Eden, — the sacred Sabbath and the sacred institution of marriage. In spite of all the scoffs of the "free-love" school, and the taunts of those who have contracted unwise alliances, it still remains true that wedlock is not only dictated by the sexual instincts, but in the vast majority of cases is productive of general happiness.

There are many of us who can testify that, next to a faithful Saviour, the most precious of all blessings is a discreet, devoted, and faithful wife. Mr. Gladstone once said to me that one of the greatest dangers that threatens our country is the lax idea of the marital relation and the increasing facility of divorces. These evils sap the very foundations of domestic life, and undermine the purities and sanctities of the home.

It is vitally important that all young people who call themselves Christians, and who profess to be

governed by a Christian conscience, should look at all questions bearing on the relations of sex from a Christian standpoint. The core of all happy marriages is pure, unselfish, inextinguishable *love*. The beautiful language of St. Paul's letter to the church of Corinth may be fitly applied to a wise wedlock: "love seeketh not her own; love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

The throne of pure, unselfish love is in the heart. When marriage is made a mere mercenary speculation of dollars and cents, or when it is contracted to gratify animal lusts, it is but little removed from legalized prostitution. Bitterly do those pay for it who take the solemn vows of matrimony from motives as base as these. The only happy marriages, the only ones that will stand the wear and tear of life, the only ones that will grow brighter and brighter on to the "golden wedding," are those which are bottomed and built on solid heart affection.

Nine-tenths of all the people in our land who are not prevented by stress of circumstances, or by impaired health, would, if left to their own choice, prefer wedlock to celibacy. Yet an immense number of intelligent and virtuous persons are to-day unmarried.

I have not the least doubt that one reason why many of these are now single is that they have lost

the object of their affection by death. Such was the well-known case of Washington Irving, and of many others that I could name.

Another is that the hopes of many have been disappointed and their affections have been cruelly trifled with.

Many a young girl has given her heart to a young man only to have her love shamefully tampered with and remorselessly flung away. God only knows how many aching hearts are concealed beneath faces that strive hard to wear a smile.

Nor is this sin against the affections confined to one sex. Sometimes it is the young woman who stoops to the degradation of being a silly flirt or a frivolous coquette. She takes a wicked pride in boasting of her conquests, and in having a platoon of suitors at her feet. Such conscienceless triflers are often punished by being left to what is anything but a "single *blessedness*," or else are driven to the alternative of a "poor stick" or no husband at all. They reap as they have sown.

My young friends, allow me to offer to you a few frank and fatherly words on a matter that not only concerns your happiness, but most vitally concerns your Christian character. What is called *flirting* is not only a wretched folly; it is a heinous sin. It is a playing with fire in which you are likely to be badly burned. It is a game of deception in which

you may excite hopes only to end in cruel disappointment. It is a wanton tampering with that most sensitive and sacred thing, the affection of a trusting heart. It is a burning disgrace in the eye of a sin-hating God; and, if it is practised deliberately and persistently, you may well doubt if you are a Christian at all. If, indeed, you be a Christian, you should meet a temptation to a sin like this as you would meet a temptation to licentiousness, or fraud, or tippling, or gambling, or desecration of God's day.

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord;" and there is no species of lying more abominable than that which deceives a confiding heart. You may not go to the length of a solemn marriage-engagement, or be guilty of what in a court of law or in the court of conscience would be clearly a "breach of promise." But you are exciting delusive hopes; you are practising a cruel fraud; you are for your own mean gratification playing a game of pretence whose sad consequences you cannot repair.

"Thou shalt not steal," is a divine commandment. Is a robbery of the heart's affections any less a crime than a robbery of a purse? "Deceive not with thy lips," is another divine commandment. Let me tell you that there is no deception more shamefully dishonorable than that which is so frequently perpetrated under the hollow pretence of being "only a

mere flirtation." Even if your contemptible *shamming* of serious attentions does not prevent your victim from receiving the addresses of other worthier friends, you are lowering yourself in the eyes of others and bringing just reproach on your Christian character. To be a fop betrays want of brains; to be a flirt shows want of honest heart.

This is a very practical matter that I am presenting. The societies of Christian Endeavor are composed of both sexes, who are brought into intimate social and personal relations. Young men and young women attend the same meetings, serve on the same committees, and are thrown together constantly. This is not only unavoidable, but perfectly right.

The friendships formed in those Christian circles often ripen into deep attachments, and eventuate in happy marriages. I have often joined in wedlock those whose acquaintance commenced in the young people's devotional meetings.

But the very freedom and familiarity that is engendered by these social and religious gatherings should awaken the most delicate and prudent watchfulness. "The tempter hath a snare for all;" and one of the snares into which young people are liable to fall is that which, under the light name of "flirting," may involve unsuspected mischief, and often untold miseries.

The Creator made a very delicate, a very sensitive, and a very precious thing when he made a human heart. Out of it are "the issues of life." It is too sacred to be trifled with; and dearly will he or she who trifles with the heart's affections pay the penalty.

The voice of the blessed Master who presides over all your gatherings and all your work is, "I say unto you all, *Watch!*"

IV.

THE GREAT MISCHIEF OF SOME LITTLE THINGS.

THE character of many a young man is sadly damaged by what he considers small faults, and the success in life of many a one has been hindered by what he regarded as small things. The mistake he makes is in his moral measurements. Little things become great things when they work great mischief. In the West Indies there is a worm that gnaws out the interior of an apparently solid piece of timber, and when a sudden strain is put on the timber, it snaps and fills the eyes with a fine powder. Weaknesses may be multiplied until they outmatch strength. Small faults may fracture a whole character.

The Bible — which throws its divine light on every phase of human character — illustrates the mischief wrought by the "small things" in the following pithy text from the Song of Solomon: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards; for our vineyards are in blossom" (so

the Revised Version renders the passage). Those mischievous animals had a propensity to nibble away the blossoms of the grape-vines, so that the vintage was destroyed. Though the foxes were "little," the damage was great.

If you will turn to the New Testament, you will see that Christians were represented by Christ as the branches of a vine; and a noble, well-developed, and useful character is what every branch ought to produce. Besetting sins are the sly foxes that spoil the vintage.

My young friend, do not put a false measurement on that word "*sin*." It does not mean only huge offences like profanity or drunkenness, theft or perjury, adultery or murder; it means anything that violates conscience, mars the beauty of your character, damages your usefulness, and hinders honorable success. The word "sin" in the Bible literally signifies to miss the mark, or miss your aim. If you fail to hit the mark of absolute right, a miss is as good as a mile. And then, what if you miss heaven?

The brilliant McLaren, of Manchester, has truly said that "the worst sin is not some outburst of gross transgression, forming an exception to the ordinary tenor of a life, — bad and dismal as such a sin is; but the worst and most fatal are the small continuous vices which root under ground and honeycomb

the soul. Many a man who thinks himself a Christian is in more danger from the daily commission, for example, of small pieces of sharp practice in his business than ever was David at his worst. White ants pick a carcass clean sooner than a lion will."

Instead, therefore, of trying to whitewash your faults by calling them only "infirmities" and "weaknesses," you had better label them by their true name of *vices* and *sins*. Everything that is not right is wrong.

There is a pretty large lot of these little foxes which work great mischief to Christian character and to a real success in life. One of these is *a bad temper*. Pray don't dismiss this as a mere foible or natural infirmity. It is a sin, and of very ugly dimensions, though you may think it small. An irritable temper — whether it explodes like gunpowder, or simmers and stews over a slow fire of sullenness — is a violation of the central, cardinal Christian grace of *love*. It is a sin against the grace of patience, and against the grace of humility and against the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It has an ugly root, for it is born of hatred, which is the very spirit of the devil.

Don't confound the vice of an irritable temper with the virtue of a righteous indignation against wrong; for God himself abhorreth evil. Professor

Drummond describes a deadly, venomous snake which he saw in Africa, called the puff-adder; it coils itself among the leaves, and resembles the leaves. When you get angry, stop and think whether Jesus Christ or the devil is stirring you up. An irritable temper is not to be condoned as a "natural weakness" or a constitutional infirmity; drunkenness or licentiousness may be hereditary, but they are none the less wicked and destructive.

You can cure a bad temper, if you try to, — with God's help. One of the kindest and calmest Christians I ever knew told me that he used to be violently passionate, but he broke his bad temper by resolutely bridling his tongue until he cooled down.

If *procrastination* is not as wicked a fault as a hateful temper, it is fatal to success in about everything worth your doing. The Bible injunction to "redeem your time" does not refer to time in general, but to the "nick of time." The text properly translated means, Buy your opportunities. Success in earning money, success in achieving any good undertaking, success in doing anything for your Master, all depend on this seizing of the opportunity.

Poor Slowcome Tardy is always whining about his "bad luck;" the reason why he will wear a poor man's hair into his grave is that he is always behind

time; he does not buy till everything has gone up, or sell till everything has gone down, or hoist his sails until the wind has died out.

Never let a duty drift past you. Jesus Christ never lost an opportunity. Procrastination is the worst of thieves, for it steals what never can be restored to us. To-morrow is the fool's paradise; for human souls it is Satan's doorway to perdition.

Is want of *punctuality* a sin? Yes, because it often involves a violation of your word, and is an acted falsehood. It also involves a serious wrong to other people. You may recall Washington's answer to his secretary who excused his want of punctuality by saying that his watch was out of order. "Then you must get another watch, or I another secretary."

Tardiness and carelessness in keeping engagements may be regarded as small faults, but they are things that hinder a young man's success; and you must remember that most failures in this world are not caused by other people, but by the persons themselves. Failure in life is more than a misfortune; it is a terrible sin, it is a suicide, when such want of success is due to your own want of sense, or want of conscience. God is only true to the man who is true to himself.

Dr. McLaren, in the pungent passage above quoted, alludes to "sharp practices in business."

It is a lamentable fact that more than one professing Christian is inclined to them. It comes from that detestable vice that I warn you against, and that is *trickiness*. Smartness is too many a young man's ambition and constant aim; to be smart in taking advantage of a customer, smart in a bit of stock-gambling, or smart in dodging an obligation.

You never can be smart enough to cheat God, — even in the smallest transactions in life. Conscience is your best friend and counsellor, if you are true to her; when you begin to play sharp tricks upon her, she becomes your terrible punisher. Incorruptible honesty is your best capital in business.

If time and space permitted, I could mention many other things which young men reckon to be small faults, but which deface character and hinder honorable success. Backsliding from Christ starts with small slips at first. Spiritual declension begins with little offences against the laws of honesty or sexual purity, or occasional neglects of Christian duty, and quietings of a reproving conscience.

When burglars want to plunder a house, they sometimes hoist a small boy into a window, and he unbolts the doors for the older accomplices. Be careful how you let Satan's little imps slip into an open window of your heart.

A Christian Endeavor society is a vineyard in a state of blossoming. Young converts are setting out

on a new life. Character has not yet attained strong fibre and solidity. Experience is limited. Small faults and slight departures from Christ's commandments will grow on, and wax worse and worse, unless they are resolutely resisted and overcome.

If the little foxes will devour the blossoms, or steal away the "tender grapes," then every one must with prayer and watchfulness guard his own vine, and make short work with the foxes.

My friend, you have only one life to live; its success or failure for time and eternity will depend upon little things. I beg you, don't go off fox-hunting in your neighbor's vineyard; look squarely and sharply after the little destructives that threaten the beauty and the fruitfulness of your own vine.

V.

HOW TO DEAL WITH TEMPTATIONS.

NO society of Christian Endeavor, no Christian church, was ever built for a conservatory in which to rear hothouse plants of grace; the only piety worth having is that which can stand all weathers. God does not take his own out of this world because it is overrun with sinful seductions; he promises to keep his faithful children from the world, and, what is better, to make them a purifying salt in the world. More or less temptation is inevitable. They "overtake us," as Paul says in his letter to the Galatians. Bunyan's pilgrim did not go out of his straight road in order to meet Madam Wanton; she waylays him with her wicked wiles. Joseph did not seek his temptress; she sought him, but the fear of God made his heart like wet powder that would not kindle under the torch of temptation. During the Revolutionary War, neither Joseph Reed nor Benedict Arnold went after the offer of British gold; it came to them both; Reed spurned the bribe as if it

were poison; Arnold at the sound of the jingling gold caught at the glittering bribe, and it burned him to a cinder.

Temptations are as all-surrounding as the atmosphere. Just as the wintry winds search into every crack and crevice of our houses, so Satan hunts and pries at every loophole of the heart with artful suggestions. When he presents himself at our front door, he hides his horns under a silk hat, and conceals his forked tail under the broadcloth suit of a gentleman. Sin is everywhere; it assails us through the eye-gate, through the ear-gate and the mouth-gate; it invades the pocket, and carries a tinder-box to inflame the pride and selfish ambition. Even the humblest Christian may be tempted to grow complacent over his humility, and the most consecrated laborer for Christ is in danger of flattering himself with the congratulation, "O, how *my* work prospers! how *my* vineyard flourishes!" Righteous self needs about as much watching as sinful self.

Let us carefully observe, however, just what the word "temptation" means. In our English Bibles the word is employed in two entirely different senses. Sometimes it signifies a test, as when a metal is put into the crucible to prove its quality, and to develop its purity. That is the meaning of the word in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, where we are told that "God did tempt Abraham;"

we find the confirmation of this in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, where we read that "by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." The word "temptation," commonly signifies, both in the Scriptures and in ordinary speech, a direct enticement to evil, under the prospect of pleasure or of profit. Unless there is something attractive in the object presented to us, we cannot call it a temptation. Arsenic and brandy are both fatal poisons to a drunkard; but the brandy is the only temptation, because that is the only one of the two that appeals to his appetite, and promises immediate gratification. The strength of a tempation depends on the strength of sinful desires within a man. It requires no grace to reject what we do not like. A torch does no mischief when it is tossed into a snow-bank; it is the torch in the powder-barrel that makes the fatal explosion.

Let me impress it upon young Christians that when an attractive evil object presents itself to you, and there is something within you that would like to consent to that evil, then comes the danger. Right then and there your Christian conscience must fight its battle. Some of you may have naturally strong sensual passions or animal appetites. The real sin is not in having such unfortunately bad propensities; the sin is in yielding to them. The real victory of divine grace in your soul is to refuse

the most attractive enticements to sin, even those that jump with your natural inclinations. Then the Spirit conquers the flesh. The clean heart possessed by Jesus Christ conquers the cravings of sensual appetite. Benevolence overcomes selfishness; a love for perishing souls conquers worldly ambition, and makes a brilliant young man ready to sacrifice wealth or promotion in order to devote himself to the self-denying toils of a foreign missionary. The will is the battle-ground with every one of us. If evil desires control the will, sin reigns; if a Christian conscience controls the will, grace reigns. David's crime was not in his natural admiration of Bathsheba's beauty; his crime was in the wicked surrender of his will to a powerful sensual enticement. In his case lust conquered conscience, and the lust, as he afterwards bitterly confessed, brought forth death.

Temptations are bribes to our selfishness, and we are all liable to encounter them continually. But when we go out to look after such bribes, and encourage them, then comes the wickedness. Therefore our blessed Master enjoins on us that most loving and solemn counsel, — "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." A person enters into temptation when he wilfully places himself under the influence of an enticement to sin, and continues to parley with it. If the cholera is an epidemic, then

every one is exposed to it. But the person that goes unvaccinated into a house where the smallpox is raging has no right to ask God to save him from the loathsome disorder. The young Christian that buys a ticket to the average theatre, with its abounding sensualities, has no right to pray, "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil;" such a person is thrusting his fingers into Satan's mouth. No amount of resolving to do right will save you if you remain under the influences that lead you to go wrong. As Henry Ward Beecher once bluntly said, "If a man wears garments in which powder is wrought into the texture, he cannot safely go and hire out in a blacksmith's shop."

The moment that any one goes towards a dangerous object with a secret desire after that object, that moment he or she "enters into temptation." I have known many persons to put a bottle of wine on the table under the specious plea that health required it. The deceitful drink got its hold upon them before they were aware. A habit coiled itself around them like that South American vine that coils itself around a tree until it strangles the tree, and holds only a blasted trunk in its green and glossy embrace. From a long observation I am thoroughly persuaded that any one, even a sincere Christian, who, for any reason whatever, tampers with any intoxicating beverage, is playing with a

viper. No church-member ever dreamed of becoming an inebriate when he "entered into the temptation." What is true of the wine-cup is equally true of gaming, or of the first acts of dishonesty, or of violations of sexual purity. Can any one take coals of fire into his bosom and not be burned? We often wonder how, under a sudden temptation, certain persons have fallen from a high position into disgrace and ruin. If we knew the secret history of such cases, we should discover that they had been dallying with temptation until they had been weakened and corrupted by it. The fibre of the tree had become worm-eaten before the gale struck it. No man goes to hell suddenly.

Every one of you, my young friends, has some vulnerable point. Post your sentinel right there; watch and pray right there. Beware of the sin that has a handsome face and a smooth tongue. Hideous sins attract nobody. Beware of the sin that doth so easily entrap you. Form no intimacy with any one that lowers the tone of your religion. Beware of those places and those amusements, however attractive, that weaken your love of Christ and unfit you for prayer and doing your whole duty as a pledged Endeavorer in Christ's army.

Strong as temptations are, the indwelling power of divine grace is an overmatch for them. If you are true to your Master, he will succor you when

tempted; the victory that overcometh is your faith, not in yourselves, but in the omnipotent Son of God, whose you are, and whom you serve. Triumphs over temptations will strengthen you. The Indians have a superstition that the strength of every enemy a warrior slays in battle enters into his own limbs. This is an actual truth in regard to a Christian. He becomes stronger for every temptation whose "scalp" he wins, and every besetting sin that he slays. Next to the joy of saving a soul is the joy of victory in a hard fight with a spiritual foe. Three things make a happy Christian: they are prayer, labors of love for Christ, and triumphs over strong temptations.

VI.

THE WISE SAVING OF MONEY.

MONEY is a large word, because it fills a large space every day in the thoughts of people, both rich and poor, and because it makes a large provision for all the necessaries of life. It "answereth all things;" that is, it procures those things that none of us can do without.

The desire to get money is a universal instinct; it is a legitimate desire; there is no sin in possessing money; the real sin comes in when money *possesses us*. It is the *love* of money that is the root of all evil, because it breeds detestable selfishness, and hardens the heart towards God and our fellow men.

The Bible thunders out the most tremendous warnings against those who "*will* be rich," who make wealth the chief object of their desire, and tells all such that they fall into temptation and snares and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. Jesus Christ tells us that

the "deceitfulness of riches" makes a bed of thorns in the heart that strangles the seed of divine truth and cheats a man out of his salvation! All that multitude of young men who are in a mad haste to be rich, and all those young women who are intent on marrying wealth, will do well to heed old Matthew Henry's wise words, "There is a burden of care in getting riches, fear in keeping them, temptation in using them, sorrow in losing them, and a burden of account at last to be given up concerning them."

All these things being true, how should a young Christian regard money? For it is to young Christians that I am now writing.

I would answer that you should regard it just as you regard your time, or your health, or your talents, or your influence; you should look at it as a *trust*. You are stewards of Jesus Christ for everything you have; and you ought to see his image and superscription on every dollar you possess.

Wilful poverty that is produced by indolence or extravagance or reckless mismanagement, is more than a misfortune; it is a disgrace and a sin. On the other hand, great wealth may be great wickedness when conscience has no control of the purse.

Money is power; in these days it is a prodigious power for Jesus Christ, and for human welfare. I never shall forget a remark made to me by our

Christian millionaire, the late Charles Pratt, the founder of the "Pratt Institute." He said, "There is no greater humbug than the idea that the mere possession of money makes a man happy; I never got real happiness out of mine till I began to do good with it." Yet Charles Pratt began life as a poor and industrious boy, and he never would have become the public benefactor that he was if he had not understood the wise saving and use of money.

Many a fool has made money; it is the wise man who knows how to save it and use it.

Economy is a rather old-fashioned word, and not very popular in these days, — especially among the politicians, who get their long arms into the public treasury. Extravagance is the raging sin of the times. From the national government, which spends more than it receives, down to the farmer, who wastes more than his family eats, we are the most wasteful nation on the globe.

There is an extravagant style of living that breeds no little misery, and often ends in disgrace. Some young men tell me that they cannot afford to marry because "the girls are not satisfied unless they can live in style;" whereas these young men cannot afford *not* to marry, for they are often living in secret sin. Of those who do marry, how many there are who, in their silly ambition to get "into society," refuse to live frugally, dress plainly, and reside in

economical quarters! The wretched husband racks his brains for means to keep up appearances, and is tempted to rash speculations and gambling operations, in some cases to secret frauds. More than one husband has been tempted to ruin in order to gratify the foolish passion of his wife for fine equipage and fine display.

I wish that every young woman had the good sense of a lady friend of mine who received an offer of marriage from a poor, but industrious and honest, young man. He said to her, "You have a chance to marry wealth and live in style; I can offer you nothing but a good name and sincere love and quarters in a plain boarding-house." She was wise enough to discover the jewel in the "leaden casket," and accepted him. He became a prosperous merchant and an office-bearer in my church. That young couple had the courage to live above appearances, and made frugality a part of their religion.

Economy is not — or ought not to be — a matter of niggardly penuriousness, but of high moral principle. You have no right to spend what you do not have, or what is not in sight. I beg you to strike for an honest independence, so that, although you wear a coarse coat, you are not ashamed to look any man in the face.

Keep out of debt as you would keep from the devil. It is the horrible slavery that drives sleep

from the eyes, and peace from the mind, and sometimes drives to despair and disgrace. Debt has destroyed more than one Christian character. "The borrower is *slave* to the lender."

If you learn how to save money you will not be driven to the humiliating necessity of asking for loans, — which is often a real asking for alms. I could tell tales of the conduct of borrowers that would make you blush for human nature. To see a Christian Endeavorer sneak over to the other side of the street to avoid meeting the person to whom he or she owes money, is not an edifying spectacle.

Face hard work, face a scanty purse, face the sharpest self-denial, face anything rather than be ashamed to face any fellow creature, or even yourself when you look in a glass. "Owe no man anything but love."

Christian economy means more yet than saving up money for a rainy day. It means also saving up something for the Lord and for benevolent uses. The great apostle commanded Christians in those days to *lay by* in store on the first day of the week as God had prospered them; and then they would be sure to have something for the cause of Christ.

Systematic beneficence is a part of healthy religion. But if you have not learned to save money, you will not be able to give it. Economy is the mother of liberality. My observation has been that

those who have practised the wisest economy in their early life are commonly the most generous givers after they have become prosperous.

How are you going to save money? Are you to accomplish it only by practising a selfish stinginess? No! A skinflint is as contemptible as a spendthrift. The only way to do it is to regulate your outgo by your income. Cut down false expenses. "Flee youthful lusts" in the shape of cigars, and clubs, and all kinds of sensual indulgences. Never mortgage to-morrow to pay for to-day.

Blessed be the memory of the Rev. Henry Duncan, of Scotland, the founder of the modern savings-banks! He deserves a place alongside of William Carey, the father of foreign missions, and Neal Dow, the father of the prohibition movement, and Francis E. Clark, the father of Christian Endeavor societies. When you put a dollar safely out of your reach, you enforce self-denial, and ensure future comfort when that one dollar has doubled.

Remember that your Christianity has got to be carried into your finances, as truly as into your devotions; and frugality, like cleanliness, is one of the fruits of godliness.

VII.

USE YOUR GIFTS.

AS I look out of my window to-day into the little yard behind my dwelling, I see that everything there is busy. That cherry-tree is putting out its buds; that grape-vine is pumping up sap to give juice to its future clusters; the catalpa-tree is ripening its seed-pods for propagation; the grass is sprouting; and that early crocus and that narcissus are tempting the bees to stop and catch a morning meal. There is not an idler among them. Every one of them seems to be heeding the injunction of Paul to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee."

Some reader of the title to this chapter may say, "I have not any gifts to use." Yes, you have. You are not an idiot, or else you would not be reading this book. You may not have a particle of genius; for geniuses are very scarce, and I shed no tears over that fact. If the Almighty had intended that his kingdom should be built up only by men or women of genius, he would have created vastly

more of them. There is one immense lantern down yonder in the Sandy Hook lighthouse, but Brooklyn will be lighted to-night by a million or more little lamps and candles in all its dwellings. My friend, you may be only a penny candle; but do not smoke or go out; shine. You may be only a very humble private in the vast army of the Lord; yet the most brilliant commander-in-chief would be powerless if he had not his thousands of private soldiers to do the fighting. Christ's battles must be fought and won by the rank and file. The negro that carries a water-pail behind the regiment has his place.

In the glorious work of the ministry there are occasionally a Spurgeon, a McLaren, a Simpson, a Phillips Brooks, and a Moody, whose voices are heard over a continent or throughout Christendom. God gave them great gifts for a great work. Yet in his sight they are worthy of no more honor than is due the frontier missionary that tramped five miles last Sunday to preach Jesus to a mining camp, or the Salvation Army lassie that was fishing for souls in the slums. Where the Master endows and calls one Spurgeon, he calls to the same high calling ten thousand other men less famous; for a call to the ministry simply means the ability to preach Christ's gospel and the willingness of people to hear you. Both are essential. I know a most conscientious and godly brother whose life has been a failure

because he never could gather auditors enough to make a congregation. As a layman, an elder, a class-leader, a deacon, or a Sunday-school teacher, he might be a useful soul-winner. "There are diversities of gifts." Find out what God made you for, and what the Holy Spirit converted you for; then take your place and stick to it.

As far as the practical business of soul-saving and soul-helping is concerned, we overestimate the province of the ordained ministry; and then, as a consequence, we overload the ministers with a responsibility that does not belong to them. We talk about Mr. A's church, or Dr. B's church, whereas it is really Christ's flock, with A or B as the leader and shepherd. Is all the spreading of the gospel to be done by us ministers? God forbid. We have no monopoly of that blessed joy and spiritual luxury. The glorious business of setting forth Jesus Christ in this broad land is not to be done by the less than one hundred thousand men that have been officially ordained to the ministry. What are our barley loaves for sixty millions of immortal souls? The commission to preach Christ after some fashion belongs to every one that has received Christ. No sooner does the Holy Spirit make you a Christian than you are bound to become a soul-winner. Converting grace is itself a heavenly gift; neglect not that gift that is in thee. My eloquent friend, the

late Dr. Roswell D. Hitchcock, once said: "I confess that I do not see how Christianity is ever to carry the day unless the great bulk of our church-membership becomes also a ministry. Is it possible for any man to become a true Christian, and yet be doing nothing to make other people Christians too?" Who wants to go up to heaven empty-handed?

There is a tremendous amount of power running to waste in our churches. Of all the immense volume of water, how little is turned on the wheels! Educated young men come back from college, and yet how few of them employ their gifts in practical work for their Master! Lawyers that are church-members plead eloquently in court-rooms for their clients; but, with some happy exceptions, they are as a class too silent in our prayer-meetings and Sunday schools. A young clerk in a store or shop is glib enough in selling goods, but is tongue-tied in commending Christ to his companions. Some young women have a very wide influence in the circle to which they belong; and in the last great day Jesus Christ will call them to account for that influence, just as surely as he will call Dr. Clark and myself to account for our ministry. The great thing, after all, is to have a heart for the work, and the whole heart in the work. In the first church that I ever served as pastor there was a modest youth, a humble mechanic, who had no education beyond what he had

picked up in the public school. Of his own accord he gathered a company of boys on Saturday evenings into a room in his father's house, and spent an hour in praying and talking with them, and getting them to talk. He was really a shy fellow, with very little personal magnetism; but several of those lads were converted, and one of them entered the ministry. To that humble, godly youth the Master had given only a little farthing candle; but he held his candle in such a way, and so kept it burning by a strong current of prayer oxygen, that he guided several young hearts to the Saviour. He simply used his gift, and got compound interest on it. Up yonder, in the great day, there will be some wonderful surprises. Some of the last will come in first; and too many of the first in culture, or wealth, or talent, or influence, will be sent to the rear to keep company with that cowardly fool who hid his talent in a napkin.

A Christian that loves his or her Master, and is keen for work, will always find the place to work. A properly managed society of Christian Endeavor is not only an arena for various activities, but a training-school for activities elsewhere. Mental and spiritual gifts, when unused, become tainted, and spoil like bales unopened to the sun. Spiritual faculties unemployed are like the limbs of the human body; they wither up for want of use. The best benefit

of a wide-awake, earnest, fervent Christian Endeavor meeting is not the addresses made, the prayers offered, and the instructions gained at the time, but the inspiration carried away for Christly living and the doing of good deeds elsewhere.

Lord, what wilt thou have me do? What can I do best for my Master? These are the questions for you to ask. If you are apt to teach, then let every Sunday find you with your class, even though the hot sun is streaming or the fierce rain is dashing on the pavements. Next to a loving heart of your own, the best gift of a Sunday-school teacher is not the cramming into your children, but the drawing out what is in your children's hearts. Some people of moderate talents and education become a great power in a Sunday-school by the power of their own noble personality and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Have you a voice to sing? Then use it for God's praise, and rehearse here for the grand choir in glory. Have you time, or can you make time, to visit the sick or poverty-stricken? Then put a package of tracts and some creature comforts in your satchel, and go where Jesus Christ would go soonest if he were in your town. Harlan Page was a carpenter until he came into the New York Tract House; but by practising the simple rule "never to be fifteen minutes with any one without doing him or her some good," he was the means of

winning more than one hundred souls to Christ. I firmly believe that Jesus has a place of service for every soul he redeems, high or humble. Not to find it is an awful misfortune; not to fill it is an awful disgrace. Nothing is given to you or me "in fee simple:" everything is a trust to be used for him. I suspect that heaven will be only the continuation and enlargement and sublimation of the spiritual activities begun in this earthly school. Then what a monster is that idle Christian that never uses his gifts at all!

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